



Department of Planning, Building and Code Enforcement  
801 North First Street, Room 400  
San José, California 95110-1795

Hearing Date/Agenda Number:

P.C. 5/20/02

Item: 3.n

File Number:

GP01-06-10

Council District:

6 – Burbank/Del Monte

Major Thoroughfares Map Number:

82

Assessor's Parcel Number(s):

274-14-142 & -143

Project Manager: Mike Mena

## GENERAL PLAN REPORT

### 2002 SPRING HEARING

#### PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

General Plan amendment request to change the Land Use/Transportation Diagram designation from General Commercial and Medium Low Density Residential (8 DU/AC) to Transit Corridor Residential (20+ DU/AC) on 3.9 acres.

**LOCATION:** North side of W. San Carlos Street between Willard Avenue and Buena Vista Avenue

**ACREAGE:** 3.9 acres

#### APPLICANT/OWNER:

Staff/Various

#### GENERAL PLAN LAND USE / TRANSPORTATION DIAGRAM DESIGNATION

Existing Designation: General Commercial & Medium Low Density Residential (8 DU/AC)

Proposed Designation: Transit Corridor Residential (20+ DU/AC)

**EXISTING ZONING DISTRICT(S):** LI – Light Industrial

#### SURROUNDING LAND USES AND GENERAL PLAN DESIGNATION(S):

North: Single-Family Residential – Medium Low Density Residential (8 DU/AC)

South: Commercial/Retail – General Commercial

East: Single-Family Residential & Office – Medium Low Density Residential (8 DU/AC) & General Commercial

West: Single-Family Residential & Auto Repair – Medium Low Density Residential (8 DU/AC) & General Commercial

#### ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW STATUS:

Housing Opportunity Study Phase II Environmental Impact Report (EIR) – Pending

#### PLANNING STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Transit Corridor Residential (20+ DU/AC)

Approved by:

Date:

#### PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

#### CITY COUNCIL ACTION:

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**CITY DEPARTMENT AND PUBLIC AGENCY COMMENTS RECEIVED:**

City of San Jose Parks and Recreation Commission – This amendment and GP01-06-09, GP01-06-11, and GP01-06-12 together would generate the need for an accumulated 2.6 acres of dedicated parkland to serve new residents of these projects. These neighborhoods are deficient in neighborhood park land and the City should make effort to secure additional new park land to serve the residents of new residential projects in this area.

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**GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE:**

See Public Outreach section

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**ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:****PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

This is a staff-initiated General Plan amendment request to change the Land Use/Transportation Diagram from General Commercial and Medium Low Density Residential (8 DU/AC) to Transit Corridor Residential (20+ DU/AC). This amendment is one of four Housing Opportunity Phase II amendments along the Stevens Creek Boulevard/West San Carlos Street Transit-Oriented Development Corridor. The existing General Commercial land use designation is a non-specialized commercial designation intended to permit a wide range of commercial uses. The proposed Transit-Corridor Residential (20+ DU/AC) land use designation permits wholly higher density residential projects or mixed-use type development where neighborhood serving commercial can be provided on the first two floors and residential units above. Freestanding neighborhood commercial buildings are permitted where the development is well integrated into the project and they are located along a pedestrian pathway. The change in land use designations could potentially facilitate the development of 215 units, assuming a density of 55 dwelling units to the acre.

**BACKGROUND**

This is a staff-initiated General Plan Amendment as part of the Phase II Housing Opportunity Study (HOS). The City Council deferred this amendment from the 2001 Annual Review to allow for completion of an Environmental Impact Report.

In January 2000, the City Council directed Planning staff to conduct the Housing Opportunity Study (HOS), which is modeled on the successful Housing Initiative Study that was completed for the Guadalupe Light Rail Transit Corridor in April 1991. The Housing Opportunity Study is a proactive approach to facilitate increased housing production, support transit with appropriate development intensities, and further the City's longstanding policy of infill development. The HOS seeks to identify specific vacant or underutilized parcels, particularly within or near the General Plan Transit-Oriented Development Corridors, which would be suitable for higher density or mixed-use development. These Corridors include the Guadalupe, Stevens Creek Boulevard/West San Carlos Street, Santa Clara Street/Alum Rock Avenue, Winchester Boulevard, Capitol Avenue/Expressway, and Vasona.

The identification of sites suitable for higher density housing is consistent with the General Plan Housing Major Strategy, which acknowledges the City's role in providing housing opportunities to meet the needs of all residents. Additionally, targeting sites for infill development is consistent with the Growth Management and Sustainable City Major Strategies, which seek to locate housing in appropriate areas to foster transit use, the efficient delivery of urban services and other objectives.

The HOS has three phases, with each phase evaluating different Transit Oriented Development Corridors. The first phase, which focused on the Capitol Avenue/Expressway Transit-Oriented Development Corridor, was completed in 2001. Phase II of the Housing Opportunity Study is focused on the Stevens Creek Boulevard/West San Carlos Street and Santa Clara Street/Alum Rock Avenue Transit-Oriented Development Corridors.

The Stevens Creek Boulevard/West San Carlos corridor is unique from most of the other transit corridors in that a light rail line is not yet planned. Therefore, the maximum building height for this corridor is 50 feet, in comparison with some of the remaining corridors where the maximum building height is 120 feet for sites within 2,000 feet of a planned or existing light rail station.

### **Site and Surrounding Uses**

The 3.0-acre site is located on the north side of West San Carlos Street, between Willard Avenue and Buena Vista Avenue. The existing use on the site is the Meineke Brake Center and the AMF Fiesta Bowling Center, of which half of the site serves as a parking lot. The site is surrounded by developed properties, including commercial uses to east, south and west, and a direct interface with single-family residential units to the north. The site adjoins a major arterial (West San Carlos Street) and a mix of commercial uses to the south. The area is typified by older commercial businesses such as auto-related uses and neighborhood serving "strip centers" with a nearby mix of residences.

The subject site is located within the Stevens Creek Boulevard/West San Carlos Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Corridor, one of six TOD Corridors identified in the City's General Plan. The TOD Corridors are areas designated by the City generally suitable for higher density residential, more intensification of non-residential uses, and mixed-use development. These corridors are centered along existing or planned light rail transit lines and/or major bus routes. The Stevens Creek Boulevard/West San Carlos TOD Corridor includes a potential, future light rail line that would link western San Jose with the Downtown and central San Jose and provide the opportunity for reuse and redevelopment of older commercial and residential uses. If this corridor is selected for light rail construction, it will likely take 7 to 10 years to complete construction and begin service.

As a more immediate objective, the community has been working with the City's Strong Neighborhood Initiative (SNI) staff to propose the development of a historic trolley route established along this corridor and down Bascom Avenue (Burbank/Del Monte SNI area). This would recapture the history of the area and provide improved transit connections through the neighborhood, either permanently or on a temporary basis, if the light rail installation is eventually approved for this corridor (see Figure 1).

The General Plan amendment site is located within the Burbank/Del Monte SNI area.

The Burbank/Del Monte SNI area is generally delineated by Highway 17 on the western edge, Los Gatos Creek to the east, San Carlos Street and portions of Forest Avenue, Park Avenue and The Alameda to the north, and Fruitdale Avenue, Southwest Expressway and Interstate 280 from the southern boundary. City staff, community members and business owners collaborated to create an Improvement Plan launched in February 2001. The plan identifies goals and action items for improving the community, ranging from business development strategies to creating more open space to initiating regular neighborhood clean up events. The plan is anticipated to be adopted by the City Council in May 2002.

The subject site is also located within the West San Carlos Neighborhood Business District (NBD) and is part of the San Jose Redevelopment Agency's NBD program. The NBD program encourages private investment in San Jose's older commercial shopping streets by addressing parking problems, improving building facades, accomplishing needed street improvements, modernizing underground utilities, and offering marketing advice to small businesses. The General Plan NBD overlay designation is applied to predominantly commercial land use designations in areas where there are strip or "main street" commercial areas that function business districts. Such areas provide a focal point and identity for the community. The West San Carlos Neighborhood Business District is a mix of commercial uses, predominantly commercial strip centers, but also "parking lots strips" where the parking is located in front of the buildings.

## **ANALYSIS**

### **Land Use Compatibility**

The proposed General Plan amendment is located along a potential, future Light Rail line, which would extend along the Stevens Creek Boulevard/West San Carlos corridor. In order to support the current and anticipated higher density development, business owners and residents active in the Burbank/Del Monte Strong Neighborhood Initiative support the long-term goal of a light rail extension along the Stevens Creek Boulevard/West San Carlos corridor.

Staff supports the proposed change to the Land Use/Transportation Diagram from General Commercial and Medium Low Density Residential (8 DU/AC) to Transit Corridor Residential (20+ DU/AC). The proposed land use change would provide opportunities to integrate uses and intensify land uses in appropriate locations. Transit Corridor Residential (20+ DU/AC) allows wholly residential projects or projects with commercial uses at street level in conjunction with higher density uses on upper floors. Given the site's location within the TOD Corridor and NBD, the development would need to conform to both the underlying land use designation and the NBD overlay designation. The two categories would facilitate pedestrian-oriented development that includes a component of ground floor retail that maintains a street presence as well as a minimum of 20 dwelling units per acre.

Site specific densities, design, and uses will be determined at the zoning stage based on compatibility with surrounding land uses and conformance with General Plan policies. As stated previously, the uses adjacent to the northern portion of the site are of single-family detached residential. When development occurs on the subject site, sensitivity should be considered in regards to the adjacent neighborhood character. Levels of intensification on the site need to be compatible with adjacent uses. The unique configuration of the parcel in question would allow

for a scaled mixed use project with lower densities to the north and higher along the major arterial (West San Carlos Street) frontage at the southern boundary of the site.

### **Policy Consistency**

The proposed land use change within the Stevens Creek Boulevard/West San Carlos TOD Corridor is consistent with several General Plan Major Strategies, including Growth Management, Housing and Sustainable City. These strategies support the increase of residential densities near planned rail stations, infill development and efficient use of resources. The proposed amendment is also consistent with several General Plan Goals and Policies which encourage higher density housing near planned light rail lines and other major transportation facilities. The Balanced Community Policy #2 supports the integration of housing with transportation systems and Residential Land Use Policy #3 states that locations near light rail transit stations and along transit routes are preferable for higher density housing. The intensification of areas near access to transit allows for higher density housing in appropriate urban locations, where city services and facilities are located, resulting in reduced sprawl and efficient use of resources.

### **Environmental Issues**

The Housing Opportunity Study Phase II Environmental Impact Report (EIR) was prepared in conformance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The EIR provides program level environmental review appropriate for the adoption of amendments to the San Jose 2020 General Plan. The EIR analyzed impacts and proposed mitigation measures, where possible, for the following items:

- land use
- transportation
- air quality
- noise
- hazardous materials
- geology and soils
- hydrology
- cultural resources
- biology
- utilities
- energy

The EIR identified that the proposed designation for all the HOS II sites along the Stevens Creek Boulevard/West San Carlos Street TOD corridor would result in a significant unavoidable impact, in regards to transportation and air quality. The remaining items would result in a less than significant impact with the proposed mitigation measures identified within the Housing Opportunity Study Phase II EIR. There are many General Plan Policies that can help mitigate transportation impacts. However, should these sites develop prior to completion of the transit lines planned for the Stevens Creek Boulevard/West San Carlos Street TOD Corridor, the proposed land use changes would result in significant unavoidable impacts. Air quality is considered a significant unavoidable impact because the project proposes additional residential units not reflected in the Clean Air Plan. The existing Clean Air Plan should be amended to reflect the current *San Jose 2020 General Plan*.

### **PUBLIC OUTREACH**

The property owners within the amendment site boundaries and/or property owners within a 1000-foot radius of the amendment site were sent a newsletter regarding the three community

meetings that were held on April 10<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, and 18<sup>th</sup> 2002. They also received a public hearing notice regarding the public hearings to be held on the subject amendment before the Planning Commission in May and City Council in June. In addition, the community can be kept informed about the status of amendments on the Department's web-site, which contains information on the General Plan process, each proposed amendment, staff reports, and hearing schedule.

At the community meetings, the community expressed several concerns regarding the location of the higher density housing in this area. Staff also brought the Housing Opportunity Study Phase II (HOSII) sites to the Burbank/Del Monte Strong Neighborhood Initiative Neighborhood Action Coalition meetings for comment. Similar comments were received at both meetings as listed below:

- Tall buildings should not be located adjacent to single-family residential neighborhoods.
- Transportation Level of Service (LOS) is already deteriorated, handling the existing population.
- Traffic conditions in the area have been substandard prior to approval of projects currently being built in the area.
- The Stevens Creek Boulevard/West San Carlos Street Transit-Oriented Development Corridor designation is misleading.
- There are no parks or libraries in the area and approving more housing would increase the demand for these services.
- The greater area surrounding the site should be master planned.

In addition, a letter (see attached) was received by the Buena Vista Neighborhood Association which address similar concerns to those received by staff at the formerly mentioned community meetings. The letter supports the City's efforts of providing infrastructure to an already populated area; however, does not condone creating the opportunity for additional housing in the area. The Buena Vista Neighborhood Association states that future housing added to the area would only create greater parking and road congestion problems.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Planning staff recommends Transit Corridor Residential (20+ DU/AC).

## **Attachments**

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